

“A FREE INQUIRY” under the authority of the People: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson on Religion

By Franklin T. Lambert

For John Adams the math simply did not work. That is, the Trinitarian claim that one is three and three is one made no sense whatever to him, and he rejected it. In doing so, he did not reject divine revelation, nor did he reject Christianity; indeed, he affirmed both. But Adams insisted in a letter to Thomas Jefferson that “the human understanding is a revelation from its Maker” and that nature is a revelation of “Nature’s God.” And, according to the revelations of human understanding and nature, two plus two equals four. He also believed that the Bible contained revelatory truth about God and provided a guide for moral behavior, but he thought that the Bible had been corrupted by translators, monks, and theologians. Thus, the teachings of Scripture had to be sifted through the sieve of human reason and the laws of nature, and that which did not correspond had to be cast out or explained. Truth, he insisted, was known only to God but humans could approach divine truth through rational investigation of God’s handiwork, not through frightful prophecies and wondrous miracles contained in Scripture and promulgated by Christian theologians, acting singly or in counsels. He especially railed against Calvinists who depicted God as one who created “innumerable millions, to make them miserable forever for his own glory.” And, Adams lamented that belief in the Trinity was a condition of civil liberties; dissenters who denied the Trinity in England and in some of the colonies were excluded from political offices and from universities.¹

In his reply, Jefferson expressed broad agreement with Adams. In particular, he agreed with Adams’ assertion that “the human understanding is a revelation from its

Maker.” He then told Adams how he had applied his human understanding to the Bible, which, like Adams, he thought to be filled with corruptions. Jefferson said that to get to the sublime morals taught by Jesus, one must first pare off what “Platonising” theologians have ascribed to Jesus and get to the “very words only of Jesus.” He informed Adams, “I have performed this operation for my own use, by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book, and arranging, the matter which is evidently his, and which is as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.”² This radical excision, for Jefferson, resulted in the essence of Christianity: the moral teachings of Jesus.

Adams’ renunciation of the Trinity and Jefferson’s redaction of the Bible illustrate much about their religious views. Both were free-thinkers, that is, they fashioned for themselves their own religious beliefs, rejecting the teachings of church tradition and viewing with skepticism the thoughts of theologians. In shaping their views they relied upon their own reason and on an expanded view of revelation. To each, science was central in understanding God’s creation, and by extension, God as Creator. So not only were science and faith compatible, science was the vehicle for forming one’s faith. Both Adams and Jefferson subscribed to the belief that religion was a matter between God and each individual and that God had created humans with free minds and expected them to use their reason to come to right belief. While they agreed on much, they disagreed on such points as miracles and the divine ordering of society. They rejected any government role in religion other than that of protecting the free exercise of religion. While these Trinity-denying, Bible-editing men were free-thinkers, their thoughts led them to embrace Christianity, not the Christianity of any Church or of any theological school, to be sure, but Christianity of their own making.

What we know about Adams' and Jefferson's religious views comes primarily from their private writings. Each of them believed that religion was a private matter and was thus best left to the individual's musings. Moreover, they knew that religion was a contentious and divisive subject and that controversy would likely swirl around their beliefs if made public. Further, they knew that their free-thinking, deistic ideas ran counter to the teachings of orthodox Christianity. And, even after the passage of the First Amendment, Adams and Jefferson understood that there remained an unofficial orthodoxy that a public figure disagreed with at his peril.

The Making of Free-thinkers

In 1735, John Adams was born into the church in Braintree, Massachusetts. His father was Deacon John Adams who served fourteen terms as deacon in the Congregational Church that stood in the center of town and was the heart of the community. Its white spire was visible from every home and field, and its weekly round of services attracted the townspeople twice every Sunday and once at midweek. It was the church that sanctioned the birth of John Adams just as it did that of every person born in the town.

As the name implies, the Congregational Church was a self-governing, local, and independent body of believers who enjoyed the support and protection of the provincial government. Founded by Puritans a hundred years earlier, Massachusetts had a religious establishment, that is, the government mandated that each community hire an orthodox Protestant minister and build and maintain a Congregational church. If the community

failed to do so, the government would step in and provide the town with an orthodox church. Further, the government levied taxes on all ratepayers, regardless of their religious sentiments, for the support of the Congregational Churches. The idea behind establishment was that religion, or to be more precise, true religion, was too important to a society to be left to the voluntary contributions of believers. Moreover, religious uniformity was deemed essential for peace and harmony in society as well as for ensuring orthodoxy. Under the original or Old Charter, uniformity in Massachusetts meant that only Congregationalists could conduct public worship services; even members of the Church of England had no places of worship. Further, in the early years of settlement, only Congregationalists in good standing could vote or hold office. All of that changed after the Glorious Revolution of 1689 and the new Constitution of 1691 that made Massachusetts a royal colony. However, the Congregational establishment survived, though Dissenters could worship in their own churches.

The Congregational Church that baptized John Adams was rooted in Calvinism, a branch of Protestantism that centered on an all-powerful God who alone was responsible for an individual's salvation. No doubt he learned the rudiments of Calvinism from the acrostic TULIP that parents and teachers used to teach the faith. It was a distillation of the articles of faith adopted at the Synod of Dort in 1610:

T – total depravity of humans, sin results in depravity and renders people incapable of working out their own salvation.

U – unconditional predestination, though all deserve damnation for their sins, God elects some for salvation, selecting them out of his good grace and not because of their good works.

L – limited atonement, Christ’s sacrificial death was for the atonement of the elect only.

I – irresistible grace, Election, or the gift of grace, cannot be chosen or rejected.

P – perseverance of saints, the Elect are secure and cannot fall from grace.

John Adams was drilled in the catechism at home, church, and school. When he went to a “Dame School,” an academy for boys and girls, he studied *The New England Primer*, a combination reader, hornbook, and catechism, reinforcing such tenets of faith as “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.”³

Deacon Adams hoped that his son would become a minister, and so he sent John to Harvard to prepare for the parish ministry. But, when John entered Harvard in 1751 at the age of 15, he encountered a new world. Harvard had traditionally followed the “aristocratic tradition of European higher education” and offered its students the classical subjects of Latin, Greek, rhetoric, and logic that they had begun in Latin Schools. But in the generation before John’s arrival, Harvard had embraced the new thinking of the Enlightenment and had added the natural sciences, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy to the curriculum. In addition, the method of teaching had undergone a significant change. No longer did a tutor shepherd a student through an entire class throughout his college years. Now professorships were specialized, which meant that students encountered scholars with a particular expertise. Thus, when Adams arrived, Harvard offered a more liberal education that confronted students with different, and sometimes competing, ways of viewing the world. While Harvard had once been a seminary turning out ministers for the Congregational Churches, that was no longer the case when Adams attended. Influenced by the “secular winds of the eighteenth century

Enlightenment” that was blowing across Massachusetts and especially across the Harvard campus, more students were opting for careers in law or medicine than in the church.⁴

One incident during Adams’ second year in college illustrates how the new learning, especially that of science, shaped his religious views. It was then that he saw first-hand a clash between science and theology in explaining the world. Professor Edward Wigglesworth, Professor of Divinity, defended revealed faith from the encroachments of Newtonian math and science. He told his students they should remember that “God in his infinite wisdom had opened more than one road to knowledge.” He specifically mentioned logic as one avenue, and observation and experimentation as the other. Logic, particularly Ramist logic, had long been the method by which Christian ministers extracted truth from the revealed Word of God. Moreover, Wigglesworth added, God called certain people to undertake the task of unlocking those great truths for His people. John Winthrop, Professor of Natural Philosophy, offered Adams another way of thinking about truth. He told Adams and his classmates that in his “apparatus chamber” or science laboratory, theology or dogma or a priori propositions held no weight. Nothing, including Biblical teachings about the world, counted except that which could be proven by observation and experimentation. To Adams the scientific way of understanding the natural world and its Creator made more sense than did the traditional way of relying on biblical interpretation, and it held greater potential for making the world a better place to live.⁵

While a student at Harvard, Adams saw a dramatic incident of the clash between science and religion when Bostonians reacted to Benjamin Franklin’s new invention: the lightning rod. Adams applauded the invention and believed that it was a fine example of

how science could benefit humankind. However, not all in Boston shared that view. Adams wrote that many objected to the lightning rod as interfering with God's own use of nature. He wrote that they "consider Thunder and Lightning as well as Earthquakes, only as Judgments, Punishments, Warnings, &c. and have no Conception of any Uses they can serve in Nature." He said that he had "heard some Persons of the highest Rank among us, say that they really thought the Erection of Iron Points, was an impious attempt to robb the almighty of his Thunder, to wrest the Bolt of Vengeance out of his Hand." For Adams, such opposition to science resulted from "the superstition, affectation of Piety, and Jealousy of new Inventions, that Inoculation to prevent the Danger of the Small Pox, and all other useful Discoveries, have met with in all ages of the World."⁶

As Adams approached graduation he still had not decided on a career. He had, however, ruled out the ministry. Though his father wanted him to become a pastor, and Adams wanted to please his father, John did not hold the profession in high esteem. As he followed the seemingly endless ecclesiastical and theological squabbles in Massachusetts, he came to regard preachers as dogmatic and bigoted. He equated the ministry with "banality and inefficacy" and spoke of pastors as "effeminate" and "unmanly." Moreover, John had enough self-awareness to believe that he was ill-suited for the parish, that he was too impatient, opinionated, and egotistical to be a caring pastor who called on his parishioners when they were sick or admonished them to pay their tithes.⁷ So, after a miserable year in a Worcester classroom as a teacher, John Adams decided to pursue a career in law.

While John Adams came of age within the strict Calvinist orthodoxy of the Congregational Churches of New England, Thomas Jefferson was reared within a far more liberal Church of England that blended the sacred and the secular. By the time the young Jefferson attended services in Albemarle County, Virginia, the Anglican Church was “long past the great age of Calvinist influence,” and had adopted an “unabashedly moderate stance on the question of human nature.” Far from the dark portrayal of humans that Adams heard from preachers, Jefferson grew up seeing people in a much more positive light. One Anglican missionary, Thomas Barton, lampooned Dissenters’ negativism, “Instead of instructing the people to ‘serve the Lord with *gladness*’ and to have ‘joy in the Holy Ghost,’ these miserable teachers advance a gloomy and dreadful religion which has . . . made many [listeners] fitter objects for a *Hospital* than a *Church*.” According to one historian, the Church of England that nurtured Thomas Jefferson combined “rationalism, moralism, and piety.” Parishioners were taught that the world was an understandable place, not one filled with sudden surprises, such as bolts of lightning hurled at sinners by an angry God. Indeed, by studying nature, one could gain an understanding of the Creator. The chief goal of Anglicans was to live a good life, one that conformed to Christian moral teachings.⁸

The quality of Thomas Jefferson’s early education can best be described as mixed. As did most gentlemen planters in mid-eighteenth-century Virginia, Peter Jefferson placed his son with a tutor who was expected to initiate his charges in classical education with an emphasis on Greek and Latin. Unfortunately, young Thomas fell under the tutelage of William Douglas, a Scotsman who was barely competent in classic languages and his French, tainted by a heavy Scottish accent, was little better.

Fortunately, Thomas at age 14 found a much more able teacher in the Reverend James Maury. Maury had attended William & Mary and had returned to England to take Holy Orders. He was a man of piety though he had little use for Evangelical enthusiasts, especially itinerant preachers who paid no attention to parish lines and preached where they would. In particular, he objected to their appeal to listeners' emotions and to their attacks on those who espoused a different theology, namely, that of Anglican ministers. Maury was an excellent teacher, one that Jefferson, as an adult, praised for the "correctness of his classical scholarship." Maury offered more than an education in the classics; he, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, led his students into a study of their Native Tongue and into an exploration of modern as well as ancient literature.⁹

Five years after John Adams graduated from Harvard, Thomas Jefferson entered the College of William and Mary at the age of 17. It was at college, as it had been for Adams, that Jefferson developed his independent mind. William and Mary in 1760 was a tiny college boasting of a faculty that numbered seven and a student body that totaled no more than a hundred. Students were enrolled in one of four schools: the grammar school, which was a preparatory school; the Indian school, where a handful of Native Americans attended; the divinity school, which Jefferson would later help abolish; and the philosophy school, where Jefferson was enrolled. The philosophy faculty consisted of two members, one of which was William Small who would have the greatest influence on Jefferson. With the exception of Small, the William and Mary faculty were Anglican clergymen. In about half of Jefferson's courses, Small was his instructor, and he lectured over a wide range of subjects including science, ethics, rhetoric, and belles letters. Small

introduced his best-known student to the “expansion of science” and the limitless possibilities that it represented.¹⁰

Thomas Jefferson embodied the Enlightenment. While at William and Mary he embarked upon a lifelong quest for knowledge, not the knowledge that others handed down or the received lore from tradition, but that which came from rigorous, sustained study. As one biographer put it, no New England Calvinist was more self-disciplined than he was, but he pursued his quest for knowledge, not simply as a duty to learn, but for the “infinite delight” he experienced in understanding the physical and social world about him. Under Small’s guidance, the young Jefferson came to see that intellectual freedom was the key to true knowledge, that is, a mind rid of all encumbrances that would impede free inquiry. To embark on his journey for knowledge, the first major obstacle that he had to clear was the doctrine of “supernatural revelation.” Religious leaders based their claims on supernatural revelation found in Holy Scriptures, and they insisted that that revelation was beyond challenge. It must be accepted without question. That attitude flew in the face of Jefferson’s enlightened education that led him to question everything. It did not mean that he did not believe in God; in fact he always expressed a firm belief in God, especially as Creator. But it did mean that he insisted on arriving at that belief on his own, through the use of his Reason. A sentence that he copied in his “Literary Bible” captures the sentiment. “No hypothesis,” he copied from Lord Bolingbroke, “ought to be maintained if a single phenomenon stands in direct opposition to it.”¹¹ All biblical claims were included in that sweeping statement.

At about the same time that young Jefferson was questioning the very foundation of the Christian faith, Adams was questioning one of its central doctrines. Already

disposed to look askance at the theological contentions of Calvinist ministers, Adams by age 21 had become a free thinker who filtered all religious doctrines through the sieve of his own reason. He came to see Jonathan Mayhew, Pastor of the West Church in Boston, as one whose views made sense to him. Mayhew rejected Calvinism and taught instead a “theology of virtue.” He had no use for “metaphysical niceties” and thought that faith was of importance only to the degree that it promoted good works. One of the “metaphysical niceties” that he jettisoned was that of the Divinity and Satisfaction of Jesus Christ.” That is, he did not believe Jesus was divine nor did he believe that he died a sacrificial death to atone for the sins of humankind and thus satisfy God’s need for justice. Certainly Mayhew’s ideas were far from universally accepted; indeed, Adams said they were “not generally approved.” Adams, however, was drawn to them. He recalled that he and a Major Greene on one occasion “fell into some conversation” about Mayhew’s rejection of the doctrine of Christ’s Divinity and Satisfaction. Adams was unconvinced by Greene’s argument that “a mere creature, or finite Being, could not make Satisfaction to infinite Justice, for any Crimes,” adding that “these things are very mysterious.” Adams wrote in the margin next to that entry in his diary: “Thus mystery is made a convenient Cover for absurdity.”¹²

Thus, as Adams and Jefferson completed their formal education and embarked on careers of law and public service, they had already established the foundations for their more mature reflections on religion. Each could be described as a free-thinker. Each was a devotee of the new science associated with the Enlightenment. And both were skeptical, if not hostile, to theological and biblical claims that religious leaders insisted must be accepted on faith alone.

“Ye will say I am no Christian”

Over evening conversations in Philadelphia in 1798 and 1799, Dr. Benjamin Rush and Thomas Jefferson had long discussions that ranged over a number of subjects, including that of religion. One night Rush asked Jefferson to write his views of the Christian religion. Believing that religion was a private matter between God and the individual, Jefferson was reticent about stating his religious notions in any public way. He told Rush he feared that, “the communication of my religious tenets to the public” might become fodder for the “malignant perversions of those who make every word from me a text for new misrepresentations and calumnies.”¹³ So he did not provide Rush with the requested essay on his personal beliefs.

Two years later while running for President in a campaign against John Adams, Jefferson discovered just how his public religious utterances could be turned against him. In 1785, he had published *Notes on the State of Virginia* in which he had discussed a number of topics about Virginia, including that of religion. In that text, Jefferson expressed some of his personal views. First, when describing the physical landscape, he declared that the Great Flood described in Genesis could not have occurred, that a scientific exploration of “natural causes” ruled out the possibility of rainfall sufficient to cover the entire earth. There simply was not enough moisture in the earth’s atmosphere. Calvinist ministers who supported Adams jumped on that statement as proof that Jefferson denied the divine inspiration of the Bible and that he was, therefore, an infidel. Second, in discussing religious freedom in Virginia, Jefferson wrote, “Let every man

speaking freely without fear; maintain the principles that he believes, worship according to his own faith, either one God, three Gods, no Gods, or twenty Gods: and let government protect him in so doing.”¹⁴ To the Calvinists, rather than a defense of religious liberty, Jefferson’s utterance indicated that he was, at best, a polytheist, and at worst, an atheist.

Jefferson learned his lesson; his religion was private and should remain that way. However, he continued to think about Rush’s request, and in spring 1803, while President of the United States, he set down his views and sent them to Rush in Philadelphia. What had spurred him to action was reading Joseph Priestly’s “comparative view of Socrates & Jesus.” Both Jefferson and Adams greatly admired Priestley who, to them represented the best of the Enlightenment. Priestley was a scientist of international reputation, noted primarily for his contributions for discovering oxygen and for studying the properties of electricity. He was also a free thinker whose naturalistic view of Christianity led him to embrace Unitarianism; indeed he is credited with establishing the first Unitarian congregation in Britain. In 1794, Priestley moved to Philadelphia, and it was from there that he sent Jefferson a copy of his treatise. Jefferson received it while on a visit to Monticello and read it on his return trip to the White House. He was captivated by the work because it reflected the “general view” that he had on the subject of the life and importance of Jesus Christ. Inspired by Priestley’s thoughts, Jefferson penned an outline of what he called a “SYLLABUS OF AN ESTIMATE OF THE MERIT OF THE DOCTRINES OF JESUS, COMPARED WITH THOSE OF OTHERS” and sent a copy to Rush.¹⁵

Jefferson’s mature reflections on Christianity are outlined in that syllabus, as are Adam’s in his reply to it. First, Jefferson critiqued what he considered to be the central religious contributions of Greek and Roman Philosophers, Jews, and Jesus. None in his

view had a system of belief that he was willing to embrace uncritically; all were defective. Of the philosophers, he thought that their “precepts related chiefly to ourselves,” especially those respecting self-control, were “really great.” But their teachings pertaining to “our duties to others,” Jefferson thought, were “short and defective.” He applauded Jews for their system of Deism, which meant the “belief in one and only one God.” However, he added that Jews ascribed to the deity attributes that were “degrading & injurious.” As for Jesus, Jefferson believed that his system of morals was “the most perfect and sublime that has ever been taught by man.” However, he believed that Jesus’ “pure & perfect” moral teachings had been “disfigured by the corruptions of schismatising followers, who have found an interest in engrafting on them the mysticisms of a Grecian sophist.”¹⁶ By that he meant those Christians who had reinterpreted Christianity through the lens of the Platonists who introduced “mysteries” and “spirits” that Jefferson insisted were absent in Jesus’ teachings.

Ten years later, after Benjamin Rush had brought Jefferson and Adams back together after their partisan squabbles, Jefferson first mentioned his Syllabus to Adams. He enclosed a copy for John and Abigail’s perusal only, reminding Adams of his desire to keep “clear of religious disputes before the public.” After reading Jefferson’s syllabus, Adams asked for a copy and pledged that by sending him one, it “will do you no harm,” and will do “me and others much good.” He encouraged Jefferson to flesh out the Syllabus and publish it. Though Adams was a great admirer of Priestley, he told Jefferson, “I am confident you will produce a Work much more valuable than Preistleys.”¹⁷

From their discussion of the Syllabus, one can see the heart of Jefferson's and Adams' beliefs. First, they believed that God was Creator and that God alone could fathom totally his creation. Second, they believed that the essence of religion was morality, not theology. Third, they believed that the basis of religious understanding was a right reading of revelation, that is, examining what God had revealed through the light of Reason. Further, they believed that revelation was more than the Bible; it also encompassed nature and human experience. Fourth, they differentiated between religious truth and sectarian teachings. They thought that all sects had corrupted Christianity and were unworthy of anyone's loyalty. And, fifth, they believed in Jesus' teaching of a "future state" and considered that belief to be an important incentive to moral conduct.

While "orthodox" Christians, whom Adams and Jefferson called sectarians, based their beliefs on the authority of Holy Scripture and Church Teachings, Adams and Jefferson expanded on what was authoritative. They, too, looked to the Bible for guidance in living a moral life, but they also insisted on interpreting scripture according to the light of reason. In one respect, they were similar to the sectarians, who also insisted on their own biblical interpretations as being the right reading. Adams declared that the "Bible was the best book in the World. It contains more of my little Philosophy than all the Libraries I have seen." But, Adams also thought that the biblical text had been corrupted in translation. To his son John Quincy, he asked, "What do you call the 'Bible?' The translation by King James the first. More than half a Catholick. . . . What Bible? King James's? The Hebrew? The Septuagint? The Vulgate? . . . Which of the thirty thousand variantia are the Rule of Faith?"¹⁸ His point was that the individual must use reason and judgment in selecting and interpreting a text. But Adams and Jefferson

looked beyond scripture to understand God. Nature was a text written by the Creator and was thus the clearest window into the mind of God. History was another text that revealed to them God's Providence. Each believed that while individuals must make enlightened choices, the grand sweep of history remained in God's hands. Further, they believed that God had instilled in humans two means for understanding revelation and guiding conduct. One was reason. As Jefferson advised his nephew Peter Carr in 1787, "Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear." In addition to reason, God had implanted a "moral sense" in every individual, an innate moral compass that was reliable in guiding conduct. Again, in his letter to Carr, Jefferson wrote, "Man was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed to this object. He was endowed with a sense of right and wrong, merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his nature, as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling; it is the true foundation of morality." Jefferson saw the moral sense as the basis for claims for human equality; all have common sense, and with it they, whether a "ploughman [or] a professor," can decide the right thing to do.¹⁹ While the moral sense could no doubt be misleading or even overridden in individual instances, acting within large numbers of people over time, it could be relied on to prompt persons to exercise sound moral judgment.²⁰

From that set of beliefs, each distilled them into a creed of their personal beliefs. Adams and Jefferson vowed that they were Christians, but they insisted on defining their beliefs. Adams expressed his faith succinctly: "The love of God and his Creation, Delight, Joy, Tryumph, Exultation in my own existence, . . . are my religion." Late in his

life, in a letter to Jefferson he said that after reading countless books on religion and philosophy that “they have made no Change in my moral or religious Creed, which has for 50 or 60 Years been contained in four short Words ‘*Be just and good.*’” He had little use for sectarian dogmatism. “Ask me not, then,” he wrote, “whether I am a Catholic or Protestant, Calvinist or Arminian. As far as they are Christians, I wish to be a fellow-disciple with them all.” Jefferson agreed with Adams’ succinct creed. In his reply, Jefferson declared, “The result of your 50 or 60 years of religious reading in the four words ‘be just and good’ is that in which all our enquiries must end.” Adams did not want anyone to think that he had rejected Christianity because he rejected much of what passed as orthodox theology. He declared his devotion to “Christianity in its Purity,” while denouncing “its Corruptions.” Stripped of all its corruptions, Christianity was about morality: “The Ten Commandments and The Sermon on the Mount contain my Religion.” Like Adams, Jefferson believed that the sum of religion was moral behavior, not confessed belief. He declared that he was a Christian, “in the only sense [Christ] wished any one to be; sincerely attached to his doctrines, in preference to all others; ascribing to himself every human excellence; and believing he never claimed any other.” In 1817, a biographer asked Jefferson to explain the “change in my religion much spoken of in some circles.” In a letter to Adams, Jefferson said that that statement assumed that people knew what his religion was in the first place. Jefferson’s answer to the biographer illustrates how close his creed was to Adams’: “My answer was “say nothing of my religion.’ It is known to my god and myself alone. It’s evidence before the world is to be sought in my life. If that has been *honest and dutiful to society*, the religion which has regulated it cannot be a bad one.”²¹ Jefferson saw his creed as the opposite of that of

most Protestants, especially Calvinists. “My fundamental principle,” he wrote in 1819, “would be the reverse of Calvin’s, that we are to be saved by our good works which are within our power, and not by our faith which is not within our power.”²²

The God that Adams and Jefferson embraced was what they regarded to be the one and only God, Creator of the universe. They referred to God in Deist terms, that is, the language of the Enlightenment that emphasized God as Creator. Adams called God, “a moving Power,” “the Supreme Intelligence,” and “the Architect.”²³ He thought that ascribing divinity to Jesus was an affront to God: “An Incarnate God!!! An eternal, self-existent, omnipresent omniscient Author of this stupendous Universe, suffering on a Cross!!! My Soul starts with horror, at the Idea, and it has stupefied the Christian World. It has been the Source of almost all the Corruptions of Christianity.”²⁴ Jefferson, in the familiar language of his version of the Declaration of Independence, referred to the Almighty as “nature’s god” and “supreme judge of the world.”²⁵ Absent is any discussion of Jesus as a member of the godhead, which including such doctrines as the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, Atonement, Salvation, Redemption, and Resurrection. To both men, Jesus was a man, a moral teacher whose ethical system is worthy of emulation. He was not the Son of God who was co-eternal with God and came to earth as long-awaited Messiah to save “lost” souls.

Indeed, both men expressed their beliefs in negative as well as in positive terms. That is, they stated explicitly what they did not believe. In one of their last letters, Jefferson denounced Calvinism:

I can never join Calvin in addressing his god. He was indeed an atheist, which I can never be; or rather his religion was daemonism. If ever man

worshiped a false God, he did. The Being described in his five points, is not the God whom you and I acknowledge and adore, the Creator and benevolent Governor of the world; but a daemon of malignant spirit. It would be more pardonable to believe in no God at all, than to blaspheme Him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin. Indeed, I think every Christian sect gives a great handle to atheism by their general dogma that without a revelation, there would not be sufficient proof of the being of God. Now one-sixth only are supposed to be Christians; the other five-sixths, who do not believe in the Jewish and Christian revelation, are without knowledge of the existence of a God!²⁶

Near the end of his life Jefferson expressed the conviction that he and Adams would meet again in a future life while at the same time denouncing fundamental doctrines of Christian orthodoxy. In August 1823, Jefferson confessed his faith in God and in an afterlife where former acquaintances would be rejoined. He said that he awaited with more readiness than reluctance a reunion with “our ancient colleagues.” At the same time, he railed against what he considered to be the absurdity of the Trinity and the Virgin Birth. He rejected the interpretation of Logos as “Word” and the Christian interpretation that therefore the Word or Christ had been with God from before all time. Rather, he interpreted Logos as “Reason” and insisted that that “explains rationally the eternal pre-existence of God, and His creation of the world.” He also rejected the virgin birth. Jefferson wrote, “the greatest enemies to the doctrines of Jesus are those calling themselves the expositors of them, who have perverted them for the structure of a system of fancy absolutely incomprehensible.” He said that the day would come when the

“mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as His Father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.”²⁷

Adams and Jefferson disagreed on several points. One was the nature of God. Jefferson was a materialist and believed that God was not spirit but had material existence; indeed, he thought it was atheism to believe in God only as spirit. Adams expressed the orthodox view of God as immaterial being. The two men also differed on the idea of miracles. Adams believed that the Creator was fully capable of intervening in the created order in supernatural ways. Jefferson dismissed miracles, arguing that humans believed in them out of ignorance of the laws of nature. Adams and Jefferson disagreed on the nature of man. Jefferson believed that man was basically good and with rigorous application of reason, perhaps perfectible. Adams scoffed at the notion of perfectibility, again hewing closer to the orthodox Christian view of man as sinner. They disagreed on sources of moral inspiration. Jefferson was a more systematic student of ancient philosophers and therefore more willing to include their ideas in his eclectic moral perspective than was Adams. Adams was also more critical of Enlightenment thinkers, especially the French. After reading a volume of letters on the amelioration of society and manners in France, he wrote Jefferson, “I should think the age of reason has produced nothing much better than the Mahometans the Mamalukes or the Hindoos or the North American Indians.”²⁸

Religion in the Public Square

In an exchange of letters in 1817, Adams and Jefferson took up the question of whether or not religion was a net positive or negative influence in the world. What initiated the discussion was Adams's recollection of his own religious education, particularly an incident that brought into sharp relief the differences between religion as dogma promulgated by sectarians and religion as a rational quest by freethinking individuals. His Latin School Master, Joseph Cleverly, was, in Adams' mind, a "bigoted Episcopalian" and a "down right conscientious passive Obedience Man in Church and Society." Rather than think for himself, he followed strictly church dogma. His parish minister Lemuel Bryant, on the other hand, offered Adams a way of viewing religion that stood in striking contrast to that of Cleverly. Adams characterized Bryant as a "jolly jocular and liberal Scholler" who promoted rational inquiry into all matters, including those of faith. In Adams' recollection, the "Parson & Pedagogue [were] eternally disputing about Government and Religion." On one occasion, Cleverly was "particularly fanatical" and declared that "if he were a Monark, He *would have but one Religion in his Dominions.*" Bryant replied, "Cleverly, you would be the best Man in the World, if You had no Religion." Now in 1817, Adams considered the question of a world without religion. In his letter to Jefferson, he rejected such a state, declaring that "without Religion this World would be Something not fit to be mentioned in polite Company, I mean Hell." He thought that "no Individual is totally depraved," and no one's conscience is "wholly extinguished." To him, "while Conscience remains there is some Religion."²⁹

In his reply, Jefferson agreed with Adams and expanded on the question of a world without religion. His answer turned on his understanding of what constituted religion. "If by *religion*," he wrote, "we are to understand *Sectarian dogma*, in which no

two of them agree, then your exclamation on that hypothesis is just, ‘that this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it.’ But, he continued, a world without moral precepts would be “indeed a hell.” He agreed with Adams that “the moral precepts, innate in man, and made a part of his physical constitution,” prepares humans to live in society. Further, that moral sense is complemented by the “deism taught us by Jesus of Nazareth, in which all agree, constitute the true religion.”³⁰ So if religion consists of the moral sense and Jesus’ moral teachings, it is necessary for a decent world. If it is sectarian dogma, then religion contributes to a hellish world.

Adams and Jefferson had definite ideas of where and how religion should operate in the new republic. They thought its proper place was in the private sphere, that is, in homes, churches, temples, and synagogues. Both subscribed to the separation of church and state, believing that the government should have no power to impose any religious views on citizens. Rather people ought to decide matters of conscience as individuals. Further, they opposed the mixture of religion and politics. Religion introduced sectarian passion into what should be a realm of rational, thoughtful deliberation. And they opposed sectarian control of public education. Both believed that education ought to be driven by scientific and historical enquiry rather than sectarian instruction.

John Adams took a leading role in the fight for religious liberty in Massachusetts. Throughout its history, Massachusetts had had a religious establishment, one that provided state support for the Congregational churches. Taxes built meetinghouses and paid ministers’ salaries, while the state punished those who the churches labeled heretics. As a delegate to the state’s constitutional convention in 1776, Adams composed the article on religious freedom that eventually won ratification in 1780. His wording

reflected his deistic leanings; in referring to the deity, he used such terms as the Supreme Being, the great Creator, and the Preserver of the universe, as well as the term God. He made liberty of conscience a right enjoyed by all citizens: “No subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty, or estate, for worshipping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience, or for his religious profession or sentiments, provided he doth not disturb the public peace or obstruct others in their religious worship.” Adams expressed his belief that religion was fundamental in a free society, that it was voluntary in nature, and that all should enjoy free exercise. However, the Massachusetts Constitution that Adams endorsed also provided for a religious establishment, empowering the state to find acceptable Protestant ministers if local communities failed to do so.³¹

Thomas Jefferson faced an even longer fight for religious freedom in Virginia, one that spanned almost a decade. Like Massachusetts, Virginia had long supported an established church, the Church of England. Of course, independence meant that the Church, with its close ties to the Crown, would no longer enjoy favor in Virginia. But, there were powerful voices for the continuation of an Established Church. Proponents argued that religion was too important in a republic to be left to the unpredictable support of voluntary religious organizations. Jefferson and his friend James Madison led the fight against establishment and for the unfettered exercise of religion. They opposed Patrick Henry’s proposal for an Episcopal Establishment, and when that failed, his call for a Christian establishment. Their arguments drew upon history and Enlightenment thought. From history, they argued that whenever church and state commingled, tyranny was advanced. From the Enlightenment they argued that God had made the mind free and

that individuals should be guided in matters of belief by their own reason, not by state coercion. Joined by the active support of Dissenters, especially Presbyterians and Baptists, Jefferson and Madison were successful in securing passage of the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (1785), which became the model for church-state relations under the United States Constitution. Under the Statute, one's religious beliefs had no bearing on one's civil liberties: "no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."³²

When Adams was president, he endorsed the principle of separation of church and state in a public way. Though he continued to think that religion was important to society and that individuals should embrace the moral teachings of Jesus, he was opposed to the idea that the United States was a Christian state, and in 1797 he made that position clear. He signed a treaty between the United States and Tripoli that the Senate ratified, and then he ordered that it be printed in newspapers across the country. Article 11 of the treaty addressed the question of religion. While Tripoli was a Muslim society and its leaders sometimes cited the Koran as a basis for its actions against U.S. shipping, Adams and his administration made it clear that the United States dealt with other nations as a secular state, not as a Christian government. Article XI reads, "As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion - as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen, - and as the

said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”³³ After his presidency he became more convinced that religion and politics did not mix. In 1816, he commented in a letter to John Quincy, “All religions have something good in them: but the Ambition and Avarice of Priests and Politicians have introduced into all of them, monstrous Corruptions and Abuses, and into none more cruel bloody and horrible than into the Christian.”³⁴

Religion became a central issue when Jefferson challenged Adams for the Presidency in the election of 1800. Partisans on both sides tried to paint the opposing candidates as harboring dangerous ideas. One exchange will suffice to illustrate the point. After a series of attacks by Federalist ministers, primarily New England Calvinists, one Jeffersonian, Tunis Wortman, accused Adams’ supporters of politicizing religion, accusing the Federalists of violating the constitutional principle of separation of church and state. The New York lawyer thought that church and state “should be kept separate and distinct,” and he warned his fellow Americans not to commingle the two, arguing that “the church will corrupt the state, and the state pollute the church.” As an avowed Christian, Wortman believed that the church was by nature “permanent and eternal” and needed no external support to “prop” it up.³⁵

John Mitchell Mason, a Presbyterian minister in New York, fired back that to keep religion out of politics was to violate the word of God. He pointed out that the Bible was “full of directions for [Christians’] behaviour as citizens,” and that Scripture admonished believers to “in all your ways acknowledge him,” and that included political

affairs. Christians, he claimed, live under the “law of Christ” and therefore have an obligation to speak out against all the “passion and violence, the fraud and falsehood, and corruption which pervade the systems of party.” Indeed, he declared, “if our religion had had more to do with our politics; if, in the pride of our citizenship, we had not forgotten our Christianity: if we had prayed more and wrangled less about the affairs of our country, it would have been infinitely better for us at this day.”³⁶

Adams lost the election and blamed his Calvinist partisans as well as Jeffersonians for turning religion against him. In his post-election analysis, Adams indicated that voter fears over religion and politics explained his defeat. He blamed the Jeffersonians for interpreting the election as a vote for either religious orthodoxy or religious liberty. Given that choice, he thought that voters would prefer Atheists and Deists to an establishment designed by New England Calvinists. Ten years after his defeat, he was still fretting about having been portrayed as a champion of an official national religion. He declined Benjamin Rush’s invitation in 1811 to do what he had asked Jefferson to do and address the American people on the subjects of religion and morality. Adams explained, “I should be suspected of and charged with an hypocritical . . . attempt to promote a national establishment of Presbyterianism in America; whereas I would as soon establish the Episcopal Church, and almost as soon the Catholic Church.”³⁷ Like Jefferson, he deemed his religious views to be private: “My opinions, indeed, on religious subjects ought not to be of any consequence to any but myself.”³⁸

Fifteen years after the campaign of 1800, Jefferson continued to express his opposition to the clergy’s mixing religion and politics. While he supported pastors’ rights to discuss public affairs in their general conversation and writings, he thought that

they should confine their comments in the pulpit to religion. Congregations choose their pastors, he argued, for their religious qualifications, not for their expertise in politics or chemistry or mathematics. Thus, he regarded preachers' sermons on politics to be a "breach of contract." If parishioners had wanted political commentary from the pulpit, they would have hired persons qualified in the affairs of state.³⁹

In addition to opposing the politicization of religion, Jefferson and Adams were against sectarian control of public schools. Jefferson was much more involved in reforming education in Virginia than was Adams in Massachusetts. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that by the end of the eighteenth century, Harvard was no longer under the control of Congregationalists and its curriculum reflected the shift toward a more secular university. But, William & Mary continued under the sway of Anglican, and then Episcopal, governance. At the same time that Jefferson sought to remove a religious establishment in Virginia, he proposed a reform of schools. In 1779, he drafted his Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, a plan for educating republican citizens, in order "to protect individuals in the free exercise of their natural rights." He called for a "liberal education" taught in a curriculum that included "reading, writing, and common arithmetick, and the books which shall be used therein for instructing the children to read shall be such as will at the same time make them acquainted with Graecian, Roman, English, and American history." The school system that he proposed would be supervised by overseers who were "eminent for [their] learning, integrity, and fidelity to the commonwealth," and similarly, teachers must show fidelity to the commonwealth.⁴⁰ There was no religious test for either overseers or

teachers. Jefferson's bill failed, more because of the expense it would entail than the philosophy expressed in it.

He then pushed for reform of William & Mary by introducing a bill in 1779 to alter the college's constitution. He advocated a state-supported college in Virginia, one that was secularized, reflecting his ideas on the separation of church and state. After being elected governor, he joined the Board of Visitors and began to implement some of the reforms he had advocated. In particular the new curriculum included a more secular, Enlightenment orientation, a marked shift away from a more classical model. But, the reforms did not go as far as he would have liked. Over the next several years, even as he held various public offices, he thought about an ideal public university.

Then, in 1818, free from the cares of elected office, he founded the University of Virginia, which would act as Virginia's public institution of higher education, as a secular university where science not theology would reign supreme. That year's Report of the Commissioners of the University of Virginia set forth the purposes to be pursued:

To harmonize and promote the interests of agriculture, manufactures and commerce, and by well informed views of political economy to give a free scope to the public industry;

To develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals, and instill into them the precepts of virtue and order;

To enlighten them with mathematical and physical sciences, which advance the arts, and administer to the health, the subsistence, and comforts of human life;

And, generally, to form them to habits of reflection and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others, and of happiness within themselves.⁴¹

The stated purposes also emphasized the importance of morality and virtue as well as science and mathematics in the curriculum, but Jefferson insisted that there be no Professor of Theology offering moral instruction from a sectarian perspective. He did invite all churches to provide, at their own expense, public worship for the students.

Adams applauded Jefferson's scheme, agreeing with his Virginia friend that public education ought to be secular in oversight and instruction, not sectarian. He also agreed that education needed to reflect Enlightenment ideas. Both secondary schools and colleges throughout the colonial period had been predominantly controlled and run by sectarians primarily to serve the interests of their particular sects. Indeed, colleges were little more than seminaries to train ministers. The principal purpose of secondary education was moral instruction, and that instruction was based on the unquestioned authority of the Bible. Adams and Jefferson had a different view of education, one that focused on the natural world not on the supernatural. To them the purpose of public education during the Early Republic was to train young men to become virtuous, productive citizens. Such education, they contended, came from the pursuit of two disciplines: history and science. History would teach youngsters how to recognize the attempts of rulers to grab power and subvert liberty by offering numerous examples from the past. Armed with a sound knowledge of how power has actually worked throughout history, students would be prepared to recognize tyranny when it surfaced and to devise safeguards against future incursions. Science would teach students how the natural world

worked and how to understand the laws of nature in order to benefit society. Both science and history were skeptical and critical of all claims of authority, including those rooted in sacred traditions.

Both Adams and Jefferson believed that reasonable Christianity had an important part to play in the new republic. But, both feared that sectarianism undermined unity and public tranquility. Both men viewed religion as a personal and private matter whereby individuals arrived at their own faith through the use of reason. They had little use for persons and institutions who insisted on prescribing beliefs for others to follow. The people, not priests or politicians, should be left free to decide matters of religion and they should be the final authority. Adams put it this way:

The question before the human race is Whether the God of nature shall rule the World by his own laws or Whether Priests and Kings shall rule it by fictitious Miracles? Or, in other Words, whether Authority is originally in the People? Or Whether it has descended for 1800 Years in a succession of Popes and Bishops, or brought down from Heaven by the holy Ghost, in the form of a Dove, in a Phyal of holy Oil?"⁴²

To these devotees of the Enlightenment, religion was a human endeavor designed to fathom the laws of Nature, that is, Nature's God, in order to live a moral life. They believed that God demanded no more of the human race than to delight in His Creation and to celebrate human existence through the use of God-given reason. Such a view reconciled science and faith; both Adams and Jefferson believed that science was a powerful, liberating instrument for investigating the wonders of God's creation. Jefferson reveled in the change that science wrought "in the mind of Man." In a letter to

Adams, he wrote, “Science has liberated the ideas of those who read and reflect . . .” He recognized that science was “progressive,” and, to some, insurrectionary. Science elevates “talent and courage” over “rank and birth,” and as he and Adams would repeatedly maintain, also over even church and bible.⁴³

Just as they scrutinized nature through the eyes of scientists, Adams and Jefferson examined texts through the eyes of historians. They considered all texts, including the Bible, to be products of human effort, and, therefore, subject to human ignorance, superstition, and error. Therefore, they embraced historical criticism as a way of evaluating and understanding texts, that is, a thorough examination of the text within historical context. Far from threatening truth, they argued, such a reading separates truth from error, both that introduced by ignorance and those inserted by willful intention.

Adams and Jefferson viewed Christianity through the lens of historical criticism. Adams lamented the absence of free inquiry into religious matters, including the resistance of Christian leaders to any rigorous examination of their faith. He thought that the lack of free inquiry, and by that term he meant the same sort of historical criticism that other branches of human endeavor are subjected to, condemned Christians because it “conveyed the impression that Christianity would not bear examination and criticism.”⁴⁴ For his part, Jefferson believed that historical criticism applied to Christianity in the same spirit in which Christians subjected other world religions. He encouraged people to think for themselves where religion is concerned and to avoid blind obedience of religious leaders who want to control what people believe. Christian leaders, such as the Calvinist ministers of his day, Jefferson thought, wanted to tell their parishioners what to believe rather than to encourage free inquiry. These leaders emphasized differences between

their “truth” and others’ “errors,” and wanted their followers to see all who did not believe as they did as heretics are un-believers.

John Adams believed that sound religion and morals must proceed from unfettered minds seeking to understand God through all of his revelations. No one should be afraid of the results. God had given humans reason and a moral sense, and those were sufficient in the search for truth. No one should be cowed by those that wanted to define that truth for others. History was replete with examples of Protestants as well as Catholics trying to dictate religious beliefs. "And ever since the Reformation, when or where has existed a Protestant or dissenting sect who would tolerate a free enquiry? The blackest billingsgate, the most ungentlemanly insolence, the most yahoosh brutality, is patiently endured, countenanced, propagated, and applauded. But touch a solemn truth in collision with a dogma of a sect, though capable of the clearest proof, and you will soon find you have disturbed a nest, and the hornets will swarm about your eyes and hands, and fly into your face and eyes."⁴⁵

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were products of the Enlightenment and their religious views became evermore out of step with those of most Americans as the Age of Reason waned. Jefferson boldly predicted that in the first half of the nineteenth century most Americans would join him and Adams and soon embrace Unitarianism. To him, it was the religion that encouraged individuals to think for themselves and to base their views on their own rational thought, not on those of sectarian preachers. His prediction was wrong. Evangelicals, especially revivalists during the Second Great Awakening, won converts by the tens of thousands who found the message of spiritual conversion and sectarian religion more compelling than that of Unitarianism. The irony is that Jefferson

and Adams had played major roles in fighting for the free marketplace of religion in which sectarians and freethinkers competed. Indeed, so committed were they to religion as “free inquiry” by the individual that they did not compete in the sense of proselytizing. Jefferson proudly stated, “I have never attempted to make a convert, nor wish to change another’s creed.”⁴⁶ Sectarians did not share that sentiment.

¹ Bruce Braden, “Ye Will Say I am no Christian”: *The Thomas Jefferson/John Adams Correspondence on Religion, Morals, and Values* (New York, 2006), 90-91.

² Lester Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letter: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, 1959), 2.384.

³ John Ferling, *John Adams: A Life* (Knoxville, TN, 1992), 12.

⁴ Ferling, *John Adams*, 15-16.

⁵ See Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton, 2003), 169-170.

⁶ Lambert, *The Founding Fathers*, 169.

⁷ Ferling, *John Adams*, 16.

⁸ Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 167-168.

⁹ Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time: Jefferson the Virginian* (Boston, 1948), 40-45.

¹⁰ Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 52

¹¹ Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 103-106

¹² L.H. Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1961), I.6.

¹³ *Jefferson: Writings* (New York, 1984), 1123.

¹⁴ *Jefferson: Writings*, 154-55 and 285.

¹⁵ *Jefferson: Writings*, 1120-1123.

¹⁶ *Jefferson: Writings*, 1123-1125.

¹⁷ Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 372.

¹⁸ James Hutson, *The Founders on Religion: A Book of Quotations*, (Princeton, 2005), 23 and 26.

¹⁹ Thomas Jefferson, letter to his nephew Peter Carr, from Paris, August 10, 1787; Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, New York: Library of America, 1994, pp. 900-906.)

²⁰ For a fuller discussion of Jefferson's understanding of common sense and the moral sense, see Garry Wills, *Inventing God: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (New York, 1979), 188-89.

²¹ Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 409, 494, 499, and 506.

²² Cited in Hutson, *Founders on Religion*, 100.

²³ Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 411.

²⁴ Cited in Hutson, *Founders on Religion*, 121.

²⁵ Cited in Wills, *Inventing God*, 374 and 379.

²⁶ Braden, "Ye Will Say I am no Christian," 220-221.

²⁷ Braden, "Ye Will Say I am no Christian," 223-224.

²⁸ Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 2.533.

²⁹ Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 2.509.

³⁰ Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 512.

³¹ See Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion*, 222.

³² H.A. Washington, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being his Autobiography, Correspondence . . . 9 vols.* (Philadelphia, 1871), 8.454-456.

³³ Charles I. Bevans, ed. *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America 1776-1949. Vol. 11: Philippines-United Arab Republic.* Washington D.C.: Department of State Publications, 1974, p. 1072).

³⁴ Cited in Hutson, *Founders on Religion*, 66.

³⁵ Tunis Wortman, *A Solemn Address, To Christians & Patriots, Upon the Approaching Election of a President of the United States* in Ellis Sandoz, ed. *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805*, 2 vols. (2d edition, Indianapolis, 1998), 2.1488, 1493. This exchange is discussed in Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, 2008), 36-37.

³⁶ John Mitchell Mason, *The Voice of Warning to Christians* in Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805*, 2:1466.

³⁷ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, 10 vols. (Boston, 1856), 9.636-637.

³⁸ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams*, x.387.

³⁹ Saul Padover, ed., *The complete Jefferson, containing his major writings, published and unpublished, except his letters* (New York, 1943), 953.

⁴⁰ The Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge is found in Saul Padover, ed., *The Complete Jefferson*, 1048-1054.

⁴¹ *Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia*, August 4, 1818. An electronic version of this document may be found at the Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library.
<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JefRock.html>. Website visited November 19, 2008.

⁴² Cappon, ed., *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 2.345, 2.343, and 2.445.

⁴³ Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 2.391.

⁴⁴ Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 1.xlix.

⁴⁵ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams*, 10 vols., 6.517.

⁴⁶ Padover, ed., *The Complete Jefferson*, 955.